

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2809
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR PINT NA NL
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS ANTILLES: CURRENT GON THINKING

1. MFA CARIBBEAN DESK OFFICER HANDLING NETHERLANDS ANTILLES, GEENEN, IN A REVIEW OF PROSPECTS FOR INDEPENDENCE OF NETHERLANDS ANTILLES, CONFIRMED THAT GON POLICY TOWARD THE WILLEMSTAD GOVERNMENT (GNA) HAS EVOLVED SINCE AUGUST 1977 DISTURBANCES IN ARUBA. UNDER THE AGREEMENT CONCLUDED IN APRIL BETWEEN DUTCH MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE VAN DER STEE (GON CABINET OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR ANTILLES) AND GNA PREMIER ROZENDAL (CURACAO 335), THE DATE FOR EVENTUAL ANTILLES INDEPENDENCE REMAINS INDEFINITE. HOWEVER, THE GON HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT WHILE IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, IT EXPECTS SOME CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE ISLANDS WHICH FORM THE ANTILLES. GON POLICY CONTINUES TO BE THAT THE ANTILLES WILL EVENTUALLY REACH INDEPENDENCE ONLY AS A UNIT BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, IT WANTS TO SEE MORE DECENTRALIZATION.

2. THE AUGUST 1977 STRIKES AND COMMUNICATIONS HALT IN ARUBA UNDERLINED THE SERIOUSNESS OF BETICO CROES AND THE MEP TO GON. SUBSEQUENT VISITS BY CROES TO THE NETHERLANDS AND VISITS IN
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BOTH DIRECTIONS BY PARLIAMENTARIANS AND OFFICIALS HAVE DRAWN GON ATTENTION TO THE NECESSITY FOR FINDING A WORKABLE, LOOSER RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE SIX ISLANDS IN THE GNA. GEENEN SAID THAT GON HAS IN MIND A SORT OF FEDERATION WHICH TAKES INTO ACCOUNT NOT ONLY ARUBAN DESIRES FOR A RELATIONSHIP OF LESS DEPENDENCE ON CURACAO BUT ALSO THE WISHES OF SABA, ST. ESTATIUS AND ST MAARTIN, WHICH HAVE FEWER RESOURCES BUT SIMILAR IDEAS.

TO WORK OUT THIS STRUCTURE, GON WOULD SOON SET UP A COMMISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS, OR "KONINGKRIJKSCOMMISSIE," TO INVESTIGATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GON AND GNA AND BETWEEN GON AND INDIVIDUAL ISLANDS. THE COMMISSION OR WORK GROUP WOULD INCLUDE OFFICIALS FROM GON, GNA AND INDIVIDUAL ISLAND COUNCILS. A SEPARATE COMMISSION, MADE UP ONLY OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM GNA AND INDIVIDUAL ISLANDS, IS TO DEAL WITH DECENTRALIZATION. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE "KONINGKRIJKSCOMMISSIE" WILL BE NAMED DURING THE CURRENT VAN DER STEE TRIP TO THE ANTILLES.

3. ALTHOUGH GON APPEARS TO WISH TO CONTINUE TO ACT IN A MANNER CALCULATED TO ENSURE STABILITY IN THE ANTILLES, INCLUDING APPROVAL OF A LENGTHY PERIOD DURING WHICH THE ANTILLES WOULD PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR INDEPENDENCE, DOMESTIC POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR DELAYED INDEPENDENCE IS NOT ASSURED. PARTY POSITIONS MAY BE MODIFIED AFTER THE GROUP OF 19 PARLIAMENTARIANS RETURNS FROM ITS CURRENT VISIT TO THE ANTILLES, BUT CURRENT STANCES ARE: LABOR PARTY (OPPOSITION) - INDEPENDENCE SOON, WITH THE "GOLDEN HANDSHAKE" OF EXTENSIVE DEVELOPMENT AID; LIBERAL PARTY - EVENTUAL INDEPENDENCE, NO HASTE; CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY - ALSO NO HASTE TOWARD INDEPENDENCE BUT EXTENSIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT NOW. WITH RESPECT TO DECENTRALIZATION, LABOR SUPPORTS THE MOST INDEPENDENT INTERRELATIONSHIP, WHEREAS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS FAVOR A MORE MUTUALLY SUPPORTING ISLAND STRUCTURE.

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4. GON HAS NO CURRENT DIFFICULTIES WITH VENEZUELAN POLICY TOWARD ARUBA AND THE ANTILLES, ACCORDING TO GEENEN. PRIMARY VENEZUELAN INTEREST IS IN STABILITY OF THE CARIBBEAN REGION. GON EXPECTS NO CHANGE IN GOV POLICY TOWARD ARUBA AFTER THE COMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS.

5. GEENEN COMMENTED THAT THE ALTERED GON ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ANTILLES IS A PARTIAL RESULT OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE ANTILLES PORTFOLIO BY VAN DER STEE, BY NATURE MUCH MORE FLEXIBLE THAN FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER DE GAAY FORTMAN WHO LARGELY IGNORED ARUBAN DEMANDS. THIS CHANGE IN ATTITUDE MAY LEAD TO ARUBAN ACCEPTANCE OF CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH CURACAO BEFORE EVENTUAL ANTILLES INDEPENDENCE. HE NOTED DUTCH PRESS REPORTS IN THE WAKE OF PARLIAMENTARY VISIT TO EFFECT THAT CROES IS INTERESTED IN FURTHER NEGOTIATION AND IS POSTPONING HIS DEMANDS FOR ARUBAN INDEPENDENCE BEFORE 1981, DEPENDING UPON ARUBA'S EVENTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ISLANDS.

6. COMMENT: ANTILLES AFFAIRS ARE LOW PRIORITY FOR GON. ALTHOUGH MUCH OF THE ABOVE IS BASED ON COMMENTS BY LOW LEVEL MFA OFFICER, EMBASSY BELIEVES THEM A REASONABLY ACCURATE PICTURE OF GON ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT SITUATION IN NETHERLANDS

ANTILLES.

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